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Y SOCCER: AN EVOLUTION

By Dave Eitland

Y Director of Development and Marketing

Rob Boynton, Traverse City, is the new Grand Traverse Bay YMCA Soccer Coordinator. He brings with him over 35 years of experience. "I have been playing soccer with my neighborhood friends since I was in kindergarten," said Boynton. His first experience as coaching as an adult was with the Y Soccer program when he was 18.

Boynton was a preschool teacher, moved to working at summer camps, and then began coaching soccer as a career. He has coached YMCA Soccer, then travel soccer, and then "Select Soccer". He went on to be the Traverse City Central Jr. Varsity Coach for six years. Boynton ran the *Just for Kicks Sports* in Traverse City for five years. He went to Leland as the Varsity Soccer coach for five years before coming to Traverse City Central to coach both the boys varsity soccer team and also the junior varsity girls team. Boynton continues to attend national training events to keep up-to-date on current soccer teaching activities and methods.

Traditionally at the Y, soccer has been played as an 11 vs. 11 format. "In order to help player development at the younger levels, we need to increase the number of touches and time on the ball for each child. To do this, we can decrease the number of players on the field and on the teams. Teams at the Y will start with smaller teams on smaller fields so that there can be more individual attention. As they grow in years the teams and fields will grow in size to eventually get to the regulations size and to 11 vs. 11 format," according to Boynton. Grades K to 2 will be working in a 5 vs. 5 format on a smaller field. Grades 3, 4, and 5 will form their teams in an 8 vs. 8 format. Middle and High School grades will play in an 11 vs. 11 format on regulation sized fields," explained Boynton.

At the same time, Boynton intends to expand the opportunities for coaches in a series of clinics. "This will give volunteer coaches the opportunity to see how a practice or game might be done with various techniques to give their team a broad experience in learning the skills of the game." As with any Y program, Y Soccer will be done in the context of its four core values of caring, honesty, respect, and responsibility.

Registration deadline for spring soccer is March 23 focusing on children in grades K to 8. High School teams will be formed as demand creates. The season will extend from the week of April 11 to the week of May 16. Registration forms can be downloaded at www.gtbayymca.org. Registration fees for YMCA member are \$25 and \$60 for non-members. Late registration fees apply.

For more information about Y Soccer contact Boynton or Barb Beckett, Y Sports Program Director, at 933-9622. It is more than just a membership ... it's the YMCA!